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Things Rarely Met With
J.E. Philipps.





THINGS RARELY MET WITH:

PATIENCE,
UNWORLDLINESS,
RESIGNATION,

MEEKNESS,
HUMILITY,
THE LOVE OF ENEMIES.

BY

JAMES ERASMUS PHILIPPS, M.A.,

Vicar of ~~W~~arminster;

AUTHOR OF "SEVEN COMMON FAULTS," &c.



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To the Memory
OF A
MUCH LOVED MOTHER,
IN WHOM THESE
"THINGS RARELY MET WITH"
WERE FOUND IN A REMARKABLE DEGREE
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS DEDICATED,
BY
HER ONLY SON.

WARMINSTER VICARAGE,
JANUARY, 1867.

Patience.

*"Patient towards all men *."*

ONE grace of which there is a sad lack, an alarming scarcity, is patience. Men who are honest, upright, diligent, truthful, temperate, are fearfully impatient. Patience, in their case, instead of having "its perfect work," scarcely shows herself at all. They, in some cases, hardly even care to be patient, but contentedly set down their impatience to the hurry and excitement of business, to their minds being overwrought, and also to the dulness and obtuseness of others. They just make to themselves a faint excuse for their want of patience, and there leave it! They view it as a slight failing, as one which scarcely has the nature of sin, and thus, from there being no strenuous effort to get the better of this deadly habit, instead of growing more patient as they grow older, they, on the contrary, become more impatient, and so, alas! it comes to pass that old

* 1 Thess. v. part of verse 14.

age is too commonly noted for impatience rather than for patience. Men ought to have grown year-by-year more patient instead of less so.

Now Holy Scripture, instead of regarding patience as a light matter, which a man may endeavour to gain or not as the whim takes him, lays very great stress on its acquirement. Our blessed Saviour, in foretelling his disciples of the woes to come on Jerusalem and on the world, spoke of patience as of one thing which would stand them in good stead—"In your patience possess ye your souls." And so in the Parable of the Sower, good fruit is represented as being brought forth "with patience." We find St. Paul rejoicing over the Thessalonians for their patience. The same Apostle also exhorts his son in the faith, Timotheus, to pursue patience, and bids him preach to the aged men that they be sound in patience. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that it is through the exercise of patience, coupled with faith, that God's promises are inherited. St. James teaches us that faith is tried in order to produce patience. The same Apostle likewise sets forth the ordinary husbandman as an example of long patience, and reminds us of the conspicuousness of this virtue in God's servant Job.

St. Peter speaks of patience as a necessary component part of the Christian character, a thing without which faith is incomplete, "that ye add to your faith . . . patience." To run then our great race of Christian life aright, it must, we are taught, be run with patience; yes, the Bible does not speak ambiguously about the absolute need of patience. It puts it down as a necessary Christian quality, one without which the Christian man is incomplete; indeed, not to possess patience in some degree, would seem to shut us out altogether from the Fellowship of Christ. It is as much a part of the true Christian as are temperance and brotherly kindness; of this we may rest assured, that patience is expected of us. God looks for it in us. And that we may the better understand and know that it is a thing pleasant and acceptable to Him, and an attribute pertaining unto Himself, He hath been pleased to speak of Himself, by the mouth of an Apostle, as "the God of patience." Patience, then, is a grace which we are vigorously to follow after and to make our own. The great poet of our nation, who often spoke as one well-nigh half inspired, shows us he realized the vast importance of this grace when he exclaimed, "How poor are they that have not patience."

Possessed of patience, men might accomplish far more than they do. Scarcely any thing in the prosecution of good works is of such incalculable importance to a man as a good stock of patience. We are certain to find in our fellow-men a great variety of tempers and dispositions; some are sure to thwart plans which others sedulously promote—all can never be reasonably expected to take exactly the same view of any matter. We must expect and look for differences of opinion—men are moved and swayed by various motives. Their education and training have been widely dissimilar—they have been taught to regard things from very different points of view. If, on the contrary, we expect to find the judgments and feelings of all men alike, being continually disappointed, we shall grow impatient; as children differ from men, so does one man from another, yet who would wish boys to be as old men, and old men to be as boys? All men are not set in the same groove—have not been cast in the same mould. Make up your mind, then, to find variety among your fellow-men, and you have gained one step in patience.

We must also not be put out at discovering defects in others—for, however many praiseworthy qualities a man may possess, he is sure

to have some faults. But the worst is, we turn away our eyes from our neighbour's good qualities, and look only at his faults—and what is this but as it were to neglect a fertile field on account of a nettle, or to despise a learned man because he is ignorant of some one subject. It were well to compare some remarkable defect of our own with that of our neighbour, and if it so happen that, blinded by self-love, we cannot discover it, we may feel assured that our especial fault is pride, which of all evils is the greatest. How often is that applicable to us which the great Apostle St. Paul said of the Jew, "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." Do not expect to find unblemished consistency in any one. Believe you will meet with flaws and defects. Sinlessness is not the condition of the inhabitants of earth. We look for perfection in those whom we regard as good Christians; not finding it, we are apt to turn away disgusted, and to become impatient. Not to be offended and put out at faults in others, is another step gained in patience's ladder. In correcting others' faults we are very prone to fall into greater faults ourselves—even those of pride and indignation; desirous to heal another's wound, we wound ourselves. We desire another

to satisfy God for two mites; we contract heavy debts ourselves. "He can by no means lift up another," said a saint of old, "who does not through compassion bend from the upright condition of his own state;" and, to use the words of another holy man: "If thou art angry and speakest harshly to thy children and servants if they should break a vessel, be indignant with thyself, who utterly rendest the covenant, and peace of mind, with God and thy neighbour. They spoil or destroy or forget something, but thou art staining and injuring thine own soul, and forgettest thyself." He that would call out a devil from the soul of another, must first overcome the same in himself.

In correction of thy brother's faults, use then great gentleness. Let the fire of zeal burn with the oil of mercy, and in the great work of bringing others to amendment of life, or to the correction of some single fault, first implore God's assistance, and then after taking what pains thou canst, commit the cure to Him, for it is God that healeth and maketh alive. O God, give us all more patience with the sins, infirmities and faults of one another! Let us not lay to our souls, as so many do, the flattering unction that impatience with the sinner is justifiable. It can never be so. Does any one despise a

precious jewel because it is in the hands of the enemy—would he not rather rescue it from thence? So, likewise, if the evil spirit hath our brother in his power, we ought not to be angry with our brother, but with the enemy, and do our utmost to deliver our brother from him. The learning to regard the sinner with compassion is a great step gained in patience. Saith not the Holy Ghost, “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted?”

But where men commonly find the exercise of patience most difficult, is under contempt and injuries, when these seem wholly undeserved. Men find it hard to be assailed by the evil tongue when there is no ground for the detraction—hard to have their good name, character and reputation attacked—hard to be set down as evil-doers when their conscience says they are clear—hard to be wronged in any pecuniary transaction when they themselves have been always most upright—hard to be cheated and defrauded—hard to have that which is in all equity theirs, taken from them—and hardest of all, to be made, while suffering wrongfully, to appear as if they were the wrong-doers—the injurers and not the injured—patience

is difficult to practise in all these cases, and yet it must be exercised in them; and it is for this very cause, amongst others, that trials such as these are sent. It is to perfect our patience. The injurer, even in the cases I have just mentioned, is worthy of pity, for the evils he does are very evil to him, but not evil to thee, except by thy own evil use of them, for thou canst convert all injurious sayings and doings into thine own great good, through them learning how to grow patient.

Things are good or evil to us, according to our use of them. Gold, which is to a miser an occasion of sin, is to a self-denying, merciful man an occasion of good, for he gives liberally of it to those in want. For what now is the effect if thou takest patiently injuries, calumnies and the spoiling of thy goods, if with a cheerful countenance, and still more patient mind, thou repayest good for evil—will it not be a delight and joy to thee? Will not all men, even the wicked, give thee praise for this? Yet in these cases what impatience is there! “How can I be patient? it is impossible—I have been grievously wronged! I have a right to be impatient!” Not so, all is of God’s ordering. He suffered, for wise reasons, these ills to light on thee. He chose this man

or that, by means of whom He might exercise and punish thee. It is no chance that has given thee thy associates, thrown thee with this one or the other. And then there is need of patience in those thousand ills to which our flesh is heir, those varied sicknesses which invade our frame. Pain, acute pain, or a long-continued dull, wearing pain, call for patience. Patience is needed in sick rooms; one of the chiefest temptations wherewith the Devil assails the sick man is, I suppose, impatience. He envies those in health, tires of close confinement to his room, and can find nothing long to give him ease. He views God as dealing harshly with him, regards Him as a stern and angry judge. Admit patience, and the whole sick room straightway undergoes a change. Each pain, each throbbing ache, each restless change of position on the couch of suffering is medicine, healing balm, administered by a loving Father's hand, and meant to correct and soothe, not irritate and vex the soul. Patience makes us pray for deliverance from our sin, rather than from our pain. Patience makes us content to lie quite still in God our Father's hands, ready to suffer His all-wise will, be that will what it may. Patience also is not a little needed when favourite plans

miscarry, and fond schemes come to nought—when some castle we have reared for years perhaps, in our imagination, and of which we just began to see the coming realization, falls as a house of cards. Patience is needed when you have to surrender your will to another's, without being persuaded that his judgment is the best. You are striving your very utmost, in the state of life in which God has placed you, to do your duty—you know you are sincere, and have no desire but to do your duty to God and to your neighbour—you are found fault with!

Patience seems almost the chief thing wanted in this life of ours. Masters need it with their servants, servants with their masters. Parents need it. Teachers need it. It is a quality especially needed in all rulers. No one can rule well without it. Such need a large share of it. Such should pray fervently for it. However much provoked, let us not speak harshly to any. It is a good rule. Impatience brings discredit on the Gospel; try we never again to utter an impatient word. When thou findest any cross to bear, say, "Thus it pleased Jesus Christ." Each morning, after settling what to *do*, consider what thou mayest have in the day to *suffer*. We should enter on our work each

day prepared for suffering. We ought not to expect any single day wholly to escape the cross. It is a comfortable thought that the exact weight, size and measure of our cross have been prepared for us from all eternity. God has ordered and arranged it all—knew what we were equal to bearing, and what it was well that we should bear. One great way to acquire patience is to think much of our blessed Lord's patience. He was patient when His disciples were dull of comprehension—patient when Judas unworthily betrayed Him with a kiss—patient when Caiaphas despitefully used Him—patient when hurried from one place to another—patient when Herod with his men-of-war set Him at nought—patient when Pilate so unrighteously condemned Him—patient when scourged and crowned with thorns—patient when His cross was laid upon Him—patient when He was reviled, reproached, scoffed at, and every way abused—patient with Peter when he denied Him—patient with Thomas when he would not believe except on his own terms.

And think of God's wondrous patience with us all. We need to cry as did the servant in the parable, "Lord, have patience with me." Think of God's patience with thyself, and, may be, thou wilt learn to grow patient with others

—also ask patience of God; make it a daily petition—say, “O God, give me patience—may I be patient towards all men—not soon angry—not easily provoked.” Get patience, and thou hast a mighty engine in thy hands for good.

Unworldliness.

*"Love not the world *."*

ONE of the things we most rarely meet with is unworldliness. It is, comparatively speaking, easy for Christian men to resist temptations to gross sins of the flesh, and to withstand many of Satan's onsets, but to throw off the world is very hard work indeed. The difficulty lies in our not realizing the world to be our enemy. Satan we know to be our sworn foe—the flesh we know we have hourly to encounter, but the world assumes the fair appearance of a friend. It is from not recognizing the world as a deadly adversary that men do not grapple with it as they ought. Yet the world is an enemy, which, if unresisted, will hurl us down into the gulf of perdition. It were well then to learn our foe so that we may recognize it on its approach.

It assails us sometimes under the form of cares and business. We must be prudent

* 1 John ii. part of verse 15.

and thrifty; we must toil for the maintenance of our families. The only chance of amassing wealth for them is by keeping both early and late hours. If a man is in business, he must attend to business. How can he expect to rise in life unless he is devoted to his calling? Did not God intend men to be diligent in business? All this is in a sense true, but God never intended the world to take His place—never intended the world to drive Him out of men's thoughts. Yet this it too commonly does—some are openly irreligious—some are half Christians—few thoroughly religious—and even where the world has been partly thrown off, it too generally, alas! creeps back by little and little, and again gets hold of the man.

The temptation to be worldly minded does not shock a man as the temptation does to any great world-condemned sin—indeed men generally speak well of the worldly minded, as saith the Psalmist, “So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.” How is it to be expected that the world should condemn the love of itself—that it should decry the eager pursuit of the things of itself? The world (men in general) cry out loudly, at least in Christian places, against such sins as adultery and drunkenness and dishonesty, but worldliness

it leaves alone, and rather approves of than otherwise ! It styles it prudence, proper self-respect, a becoming regard for the interests of those of our own flesh and blood. And so men excuse their eager quest of high place and power, and greed after money-getting—yes, men are never hard upon others for the love of the world, except in the case of those who make a high profession of Christianity, and are known to raise an exalted standard in this respect, in which case they are soon down upon them for any slip in that path.

And this fact of others not being quick in condemning us for our worldliness, is a snare to us. We can thus sin without the condemnation of our fellow men. Any temptation which does not bring with it the loss of the good opinion of our fellows, is, on that very account, more difficult to resist. Men are praised for being absorbed in business. God condemns them. Men are praised for never letting slip an opportunity of benefiting themselves. God condemns them. I do not say that we are not to study most deeply, and anxiously, and carefully the interests of our sons and daughters, of a widowed mother, of an aged father, or of brothers or sisters left dependent on us, but we are not to let the excuse of our being better able

to befriend these, make us catch at every offer of higher worldly place or power.

Men naturally like high place and power, if they are active energetic spirits, and feel it a pleasure to be up and doing—Men naturally like ease and comfort, and abundance of the good things of this world—Men naturally like a smooth, flowery, pleasant path. These are the world's temptations.

God's command is, "Love not the world." No words in the Bible search us so through and through, and make us feel how utterly unlike we are to that which God means us to be. The praise of men, with what excessive eagerness we drink it in! How anxious are we not to lose one word of it! How do we read and re-read the writing containing it—how narrowly do we scan the expressions in which it was conveyed—and recall the tone of him who spoke it! Where is the like eagerness for the praise of God? We clutch at the smallest marks and badges of distinction dividing us off from the crowd of men—the high places in God's kingdom count for but little! As our Saviour approached the hour of His agony, I expect few things troubled Him more than the out-of-place, out-of-time frightful Worldliness of His disciples. "By the way they had dis-

puted among themselves, who should be the greatest."

In the gospel-history, we find much of the old Adam still left in them.

After Pentecost, however, a mighty change passed on them all.

St. Paul had once a fellow-worker, Demas. He promised well, but the world got hold of him, and separated him from the great Apostle. Ease, or worldly pleasure, proved too strong an attraction for him. Oh! those are sorrowful words of one who could then ill afford to lose a fellow-workman, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Jesus draws us one way, the world another. The world too often comes off victor, through our own grievous fault. We look back as Lot's wife did, or at least linger in the plain as did her unhappy husband who had not full trust in God, and narrowly escaped destruction. What we want is, contempt of the world and deadness to it. It was this which, after Pentecost, gave the Apostles such power over the minds of men. They saw they were in earnest—that they meant what they said. The Apostles taught the contempt of the world in the best way it could be taught—by despising it themselves. They would not let it hold them, they shook

it off. They did not want man's praise. They did not care to possess houses and lands. Barnabas, who had an estate, gave it up. They had no hankering after wealth. The idea of rest and ease they flung away. They did not desire to be called Rabbi, or to be saluted, as they walked through the market, by the crowd. They followed closely in the steps of Christ their Lord. To use the words of another, "He never moved out of the humble sphere in which He was born. From the first to the last He was a poor man. He never seems to have possessed for Himself to the value of the smallest coin, and when He died, He had no means of providing for His mother, and could only commend her to the care of one of His disciples. He never sought to gain power, or wealth, or fame for any one connected with Him. On more than one occasion the people were about to take Him by force to make Him a king, but He quietly withdrew till the excitement had passed away." Yes, Jesus was singularly unworldly. There is not one spot of it in His character. His meat and drink was to do the Father's will. Man's praise He did not covet.

There is not, however, alas! much unworldliness in this our day! We do not meet with much of it. It is quite startling the scarcity

of it! Christianity appears now-a-days to be widely diffused—many more people think about religion than used formerly to be the case—very many more read religious books—there is a wide and increasing demand for them—services, made attractive, as they ought to be, by good music, hearty responses, and plain, earnest preaching, are well attended—but a great deal of the Christianity is, I fear, so to speak, only skin deep. It is very shallow. There is not that marked line which there ought to be between the votaries of the world, and the servants of Jesus Christ. You can hardly tell one from the other. This ought not to be. The one lives for the world—the other ought to be dead to the world. Christians ought to hold the honours, and pleasures, and gains of the world very cheap. They ought to attach little or no value to them. They ought to spurn rather than seek them. They ought to prefer to be without them rather than to have them. They ought to go out of the way of them, and if they at any time feel that they ought, for the sake of others, to take what is offered them spontaneously, without their own moving hand and foot in the matter, it should be with great reluctance and an unwilling mind. Oh, stifle, I pray you, any desire of the praise of

your fellow-men, or of worldly distinction and wealth which may rise up in your heart.

Banish the thought of any pre-eminence. Prefer to be the servant of all—to fill the lowest place—to wait upon others, rather than to be waited upon. Keep the world out of the work which any of you do for God amongst His poor or in His sanctuary. Guard against the motive of human honour, fame or commendation. Try to do all for God, with your eye fixed on His glory, and the honour of Christ's Church.

"Love not the world." Oh, is not this a passage of Scripture needing attention? Are not pastors worldly? Are not the people worldly? *"Love not the world."* Is it not a command almost the least carried out of any? Is it not a commandment frightfully broken?

It is God who says to His creatures, *"Love not the world."* It is the voice of a tender Father to His most easily led away and beguiled children. Oh, it is, be assured, a most merciful command. It is a command that was needed, for as saith the Psalmist, *"Our belly cleaveth to the dust."* It is a command which will bring great, unspeakable comfort to those who obey it. Obey it, and you will have your reward even here, to say nothing of that great

reward hereafter. Yes, your reward here, for this world cannot satisfy its lovers. "Can't it?" some inexperienced one exclaims. No, not the whole of it. The juice of its best vintage, the juice of its richest, ripest grapes was all of it squeezed into King Solomon's cup. He had all that a man could have, and more, far more probably than any other ever had before or since. He had great and unerring wisdom. He executed great works. He built houses. He planted vineyards, and gardens, and orchards. He made lakes of water. He had men-servants and maid-servants. He had cattle of all kinds. He had silver and gold and all sorts of treasures. He had men-singers and women-singers, and musical instruments of every description. Whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept not from them, he withheld not his heart from any joy.

And what was the upshot of it all?

Did it bring his spirit rest? Far otherwise. Hear his sad but wholesome confession :

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do : and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Since, then, the world cannot bring us rest, since it can give us no solid

satisfaction, since it cannot allay the soul's disquiet, is it not merciful of God to forewarn us, and so to forearm us with the command "Love not the world?" Go and indulge in pleasure—it won't satisfy you. Go and slavishly toil from morning till night for gold—it won't satisfy you when you have your chest full of it. Go and labour after popularity—it won't satisfy you. Go and get high place among your fellow men—you won't feel happier! Go and sit indolently by your fire-side, or walk or ride, or drive day-by-day merely for your own amusement, and you won't find it brings rest to your spirit. You will feel dissatisfied, and be ill at ease with yourself. The mere pleasure-seeker is a miserable being. He has not learnt the end for which God made him—his is, and ever must be, a state of unrest.

Get rid of the love of the world, and peace straightway ensues. Lo! there is a great calm. The soul suddenly comes to anchorage in smooth water after the tossing of a fierce equinoctial gale. There *can* be no rest while we are eagerly looking after a good share of the things of this world.

Worldliness greatly hinders a man's running in his Christian course. He can't in that case run straight on. He is ever lingering and

stopping and looking back. Little things—small worldly offers, prove stumbling-blocks to him. He falls, where the unworldly man does not even slip.

Art thou making money in business?—are thy circumstances improved—thy only safety lies in giving larger alms. To the devil's proffer, "All these worldly things I will give thee," let us return St. Peter's answer, on one occasion: "Thy silver and thy gold perish with thee." "What," asks a former Bishop of our Church, "is fame but smoke, and metal but dross, and pleasure but a pill in sugar? I have seen some as happy as the world could make them; and yet I never saw any more discontented; their life hath been neither longer nor sweeter—nor their heart lighter—nor their meals heartier—nor their nights quieter—nor their cares fewer—nor their complaints—yea, I have known some that have lost their mirth, when they have found wealth, and at once have ceased to be merry and poor."

The two remedies for worldliness are faith and prayer. "This," writes the beloved St. John, "is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith." It is the grasping with our soul the world unseen, that gives us power to hold that which we see in contempt.

We are not pleading for a stoical dulness and indifference, but for a Christian contempt. It is the man who now beholds with faith's eye the eternal city of the saints, who can afford to despise the pleasures, and honours, and gains, and praises of a fading world. Live then in the unseen. Recall often to your mind its certain reality, and how soon thou wilt go forth to live in it thyself. What is now behind the veil concerns us the most—look then for an increase of faith in the unseen, and pray that God would take out of your hearts that love of the world which is now in them. Our prayer, our daily prayer, should be, "O God, free my soul from this degrading, debasing, clinging love; burn it out of my soul, so that it never again springs up to life. Cut through the chain, or chains, which bind me to the world." Here is work enough remaining for us all to do, to get more deadness to the world. May the words, "Love not the world," ring often in our ears. Oh, haste ye to turn the world out of your hearts, and make room therein for the love of God.

Resignation.

*"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven *."*

It was said by a great divine, the learned Bishop Butler, that resignation to the will of God is the whole of piety, and the more we consider that saying the more of truth we shall find in it. To learn to say, "Thy will, O God, be done," is, I believe, the lesson of life. Our blessed Lord taught us to pray it; we pray it often—at least from our lips go forth the words of resignation, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." To say it, however, and to wish it, are very widely different things.

Man's natural will and God's will are opposed the one to the other. It was not always so. It is a consequence of the Fall. We wish one thing, and God another. God wills one thing for us, we will something perhaps diametrically opposed to it. It is not that man does not know—is not acquainted with what God wills, but he naturally rebels and sets himself against

* Matt. vi. 10.

it—stands up, so to speak, against the will of God.

There is something unspeakably awful in the thought of the creature willing against the will of the Creator; trying to thwart, oppose, resist His will—yet so it is. The will of the unconverted soul is wholly opposed to God's, and says of our Saviour (as in the parable), "We will not have this man to reign over us." "It is God's will, therefore it shall not be mine. I will do as I please. I am my own master—I will please myself." Oh, cometh not such a spirit and temper from hell—from the author of all evil? Do not the rebel spirits there, Satan's accursed host, chafe and fret and fume against the will of God? The most unlearned, the most ignorant, knows that God's will must be done, as sure as that, should the world last, the sun will rise to-morrow. What folly, what rashness, what madness then to wish that to be which cannot be, to seek to compass that which is simply an impossibility! God's attribute of omnipotence alone would have been (one would have thought) sufficient to convince men of the foolhardiness and certain failure of willing what the Lord does not will; but when to God's attribute of omnipotence we add that of His being all-wise and just and good, the folly is a thousandfold still

greater. Such a One, it must, at once be conceded, may reasonably claim our loyalty. Yes, just conceptions of Almighty God would produce (one would have thought) religious resignation. Yet man, fallen man, resists, rebels, will not submit himself to God. There is, be assured, in the heart of each irreligious, unconverted, ungodly man, however fair and specious his outward walk may be, a spirit at enmity with God, a will opposed to that of God. God seeth rebellion instead of loyalty within his soul. In the place of submission, there is a rising up against the will of God. And where such a spirit is, is death! Such a man bears about him, carries with him in his bosom, that which will be fully developed hereafter in the lake of fire; has that which feeds the never-dying worm, which supplieth fuel to that flame which never can be quenched. It is an appalling thought, a thought to strike terror, that the will opposed to God's is hell begun! Learn you this before it is too late, who glory, may be, in your spirit rising up against the will of God. Go on thus, and you are fit companions for the devil and his rebellious crew.

The beginning of religion is the soul commencing to submit its will to God's; waking from its deathly slumber, it cries out, "Lord, I

am sinful, vile; fulfil Thy will on me. Thou art my rightful master. Shouldst Thou sentence me to hell, I will endeavour to submit." The soul awakened, feels God's will is best, and desires that it should be done. And this, I honestly believe, is no overdrawn picture. Some of us may have experienced these feelings, may have by God's grace all at once woke up to feel that God's will is right, and to wish it done, even although the result should be our own condemnation. True conversion, whether it be sudden, or, as is more frequently the case, gradual, is the agreeing of the soul to God's will, whatever that will may be. It is the rebel throwing down his arms and casting himself entirely, unconditionally, without making any terms or compact, into the hands of Him against whom he before waged war with all his might. It is the mutineer owning himself wrong, and suffering without a murmur whatever punishment may be inflicted. It is, as Holy Scripture, calls it, "yielding ourselves to God." Have you known this bending of your will to God? this owning God's most perfect right to do just as He pleases with you? this acknowledging His real sovereignty over you? If not, I fear you know not yet what true conversion is; you have not yet passed from darkness to light;

from the power of Satan to the blessed freedom of a son of God. O it is a mighty great event, a change beside which, in comparison of which, any eclipse of the sun or moon is nothing, any revolution in empires or states is insignificant, when a soul for the first time submits itself to God! an event hidden, may be, at the time, from all save the soul and its God. The soul is conscious of the change, and its God is conscious of it too. Is the change great from the carbon to the diamond—from the chrysalis to the bright-winged butterfly—from the dense gloom of night to the smiling cheerfulness of day? O, these changes are trifling when compared with that which has passed within that happy soul! Yes, be assured, submission to God is the first step in religion, and full and perfect resignation is the last. “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,” comprises all, the whole history of the religious life from first to last.

The soul owning God’s absolute and perfect right to it, gladly embraces God’s method of salvation, accepts the atonement of His Son, lays hold of Jesus, of His most precious death and merits. “Save me, O God,” it cries, “in Thine own way. Thou hast provided a paschal Lamb, sprinkle His blood on me, so that the

destroyer, seeing that mark on me, may pass me by. Give me through Jesus the pardon of my sins, accept me in and through Thy Son. For Christ's sake, look graciously on me; if I must perish, it shall be at the feet of Jesus, it shall be clinging, holding fast, unto His cross." The petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," is then the prayer of the soul first brought to God—its eyes unsealed, its ears unstopped, and afterwards it is to be the prayer of life. Daily we ask for daily bread, daily we are to cry, "Thy will be done."

There is to be an ever-growing, an ever-increasing submission to the will of God; onwards we are to go. The Christian shoots not up all at once into maturity—but "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." A good test and criterion of our growth in grace is our growing submission or not to God's will. And not only must we bow before God's will, but we must cheerfully accept it. Visit a man in trouble—remind him it is the will of God that has suffered this storm to burst on him—he replies (it is too often so), "I know it is of no use to murmur—there is no help for it. God's will must be done." Is this Christian resignation? Is this what God requires of us? Is it not rather this, "My Father sends me this,

and I know He cannot err. I know not merely that His will must be done, but that His will is best. Hard though it is to bear this pressing weight of woe, I would not, if I could, have it removed against His will?"

In times of bitter disappointment, of agonizing pain, of heart-gnawing pain, of sickening sorrow, it is not enough to say, "It is the Lord," but we must add with Job, "Blessed be the name of the Lord;" and this we should not find hard, did we realize as we ought, and might be expected to do, our heavenly Father's love. He never, we are told, willingly grieveth the children of men. It is to purify and cleanse the atmosphere He sends each storm. It is to cause in the trees of His planting the sap to rise that they may in due season bring forth fruit, that they are blown here and there by fierce wintry winds. Of each sorrow, disappointment, trial, grief, we may take up David's words and say, "Is there not a cause?" Earthly fathers may sometimes chastise from passion—not so He of heaven. Gloomy submission, then, is not resignation. Cheerfulness and light-heartedness attend on real submission to God's will; submission to God's will, not as to what must be, but as to what is best—best for God's glory and for our own real good; yes, nothing, be well

assured, diffuseth such calm, and peace, and joy over one's daily life as the feeling whatever is, is best. I do not wonder, am not at all surprised, that they are melancholy, dispirited, out of heart, wretched, cast-down, who do not grasp this most blessed, soul-sustaining truth. Life's trials are so many and various that I do not wonder that without this blessed assurance men are crushed by trouble, and driven, alas ! sometimes to end their miseries (as they suppose) by the fearful crime of self-murder.

Did we but drink the cup of sorrow with the same love with which God mixes it for us and puts it to our lips, what blessedness would it work in us ! The smallest suffering that lights on thee, God hath foreseen it from eternity, and chosen, and purposed, and appointed that it should befall thee. Be it pain of body, or the tearing of friends from us by death, or that others vex us by their words or deeds, all we must believe, both great and small, has been measured, numbered, weighed, by One who hath an all-wise reason for every thing He does. All conduces, if we will only will it also, to the sanctification of our souls. Where we are, what we are, what we have, is surely His appointment. He who, as witnessed St. Paul on Mars' Hill at Athens, hath determined the times before

appointed and fixed the bounds of nations, hath not overlooked the individuals of those nations. The one to Him is as easy as the other. Yes, thy lot, place, state, position, circumstances, condition of health, talents, abilities, power of mind, have been ordered by One who hath loved thee with an everlasting love, and who willeth, if thou wilt will it likewise, thy salvation. Behold the secret of contentment, the seeing a Father's hand in all. The only real way to set the will free, is to deliver it from wilfulness. And I would have you on your guard against allowing yourselves to be put out by, and murmuring about petty annoyances. Some who can bear a great grief patiently suffer themselves to complain about the weather, its coldness or heat, its wetness or drought; and so of those other small vexations which must daily arise to all who have much to do with their fellow-men. Men sometimes misunderstand us—take offence where none is intended to be given. The tempers of some with whom perhaps you have daily to mix, are to you an almost daily trial. Learn we then to say from our hearts, in little things as well as great, "Thy will be done." Day by day, ay, and hour by hour, there is to be a surrender of our wills to God—an acknowledgment that of all that is done He is the doer, and

the well doer. Day by day, and hour by hour, are we gladly and cheerfully to sacrifice our wills to God. You say "No easy task." I did not say it was. I began, you will remember, by calling it life's lesson; yet it is one which must be learned, for our Saviour hath said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." Daily there is to be an oblation of ourselves to God; at times of Holy Communion a still more solemn one. We are to stand ever at God's beck—ready to go wherever He may call—to travel whatever road He may point out to us—to do whatever work He may assign to us. As a Christian poet of our time has said—

"Onward still—and on I go
Rejoicing—be it wind or snow,
Sunshine or shadow—Thou the way
Marshallest—may I obey.
Whate'er to-day, to-morrow brings,
'Tis all Thine hand, Thine orderings."

Yes, rest assured, God's anxiety is greater for thee than all the care thou canst take for thyself. He can provide for thee far better than thou canst provide for thyself. Only cast on Him thy care, and pray that His will may be fulfilled in thee. Learn to desire this only, to

get rid of and banish every other wish. God's will is best. Thou assentest to it—ask that thou mayest feel it to be so. Thou wilt find it a good anchor to stay thy bark upon the tossing, rolling billows. Say with a saint of old, "Give, O Lord, what Thou wilt—how much Thou wilt—and when Thou wilt. If it be Thy will I should be in darkness, be Thou blessed; if it be Thy will I should be in light, be Thou blessed; if Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me afflicted, be Thou equally blessed." Such a one entereth into peace. We should be willing to be as wax in the hands of God, moulded according to His pleasure. We can often, after the lapse of a short time, see God's will is best, but when we can't see it, we must still believe it, even in cases in which we are left altogether in the dark as to His purposes concerning us. Oh, it takes much pruning, much of the knife, much digging, much burning, much cauterizing, much chiselling and hammering, to bring our stout, rebellious, unruly wills into harmony with God's; not *one* stroke, but many; not one passing through the fire, but many a blast of the furnace, ere our sin and dross are purged away.—our pride, and waywardness, and worldliness, and self-conceit thoroughly burnt out! We

most of us need much cutting, striking, burning; a sea of troubles—not one wave or two—to bring us to perfect submission to the will of God, and to make us to utter with full truth and sincerity the cry, “Thy will be done.” Christ alone did perfectly God’s will. “I come,” saith He, “to do Thy will, O God;” but His obedience gave us power and strength to do it, and to do it far better I believe than we do. We might be more resigned, our will might be more lost and resolved up into God’s. We might be far more perfect Christians, far more tranquil, composed, calm, cheerful. We might attain to a higher standing in Christ’s school. Try we by God’s help. Begin with little things, hourly circumstances and trials. Wait not for some great and pressing care. Commence with bearing patiently smaller trials and vexations, and you will then be ready when the greater come. God’s will must be done, if not by us, on us. The former speaks of perfect, son-like freedom, the latter of endless woe. He on whom Christ the corner-stone shall fall, “shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder.” We shall all do God’s will in heaven or hell. God must be all in all.

Be it then now our prayer, “O God, take our unruly, rebellious wills, and break and bend and

crush them into Thine ; for to will what Thou willest, bringeth unto man true bliss."

To will what God wills, cannot bring with it disappointment. To follow God's will is invariably to succeed—it is success !

Meekness.

*"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth *."*

AND who are the meek to whom this promise of blessedness is attached? Not, we may safely say, the mean-spirited, not those wanting in daring and courage, not the faint-hearted and irresolute, not those who stand in fear of their fellow-men. It was not such as these our Saviour pronounced happy, *that* we can with all confidence assert. If *that* was the meekness which is blessed, the Apostles, the martyrs, the first Christians were not meek. They were fearless and bold as lions, standing in awe neither of potentates nor people when they knew that right and truth were on their side. Hear St. Peter and the other Apostles saying before the great Jewish Council, who had them in their power, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Yes; meekness here does *not* mean feeble-mindedness or a deficiency of manly resolution, and stedfastness of purpose. What then does it mean? I believe it to mean a willingness to

* Matt. v. 5.

concede to others; the not standing up rigidly for all our rights; the not rushing instantly when wronged into the law courts and insisting on having all our dues. It is when conscious of right, and possessing the courage to maintain it, being willing to knock under and yield to those who have no right to claim it from us. Meekness is the very opposite to contentiousness and litigiousness. It is the yielding a point when we have the power of maintaining it; the giving in when we know we might go in and win. It is the taking in good part injurious treatment; the bearing with patience calumnies and slanders; the not resenting wrong, but receiving it as a punishment for other misdeeds of ours. Meekness is the willing acceptance for Christ's dear sake of insults and affronts; the not being put out at wilful misrepresentations of our words and acts. The man who has the grace of meekness, although feeling keenly the wrong done him, refrains from injuring in any way the wrong doer. He patiently submits, and commits his cause to God the Avenger.

I am not saying that it may not be a Christian man's duty sometimes to go to law. It is sometimes a duty he owes to others; he would be guilty of a fault were he to shun it. But in cases in which he himself alone is concerned, it

would be a safer rule to suffer the wrong. Meekness will at any rate make a man hesitate much before he goes to law with another.

It were well if that passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians was borne in mind by us and more acted on,—“Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” The practice of meekness evinces great faith in God; it shows that the possessor of it believes that God will ere long right him who is wronged. He is willing to commit his cause into His hands.

The meek man avoids as far as possible all quarrels and contentions. Instead of stirring up strife, he soothes and allays what he finds existing. He is the quencher of disputes, instead of the fomentor. His object is to make men at peace, not to throw about fire-brands. Meekness, instead of magnifying affronts, treats them as not intended. It does not stand upon its own dignity, and therefore does not imagine slights to be designed. Any unkindness or ill-usage it takes as its desert, and is thankful it is no worse. It receives it as a cross God has given it to carry. King David was a remarkable instance of meekness when, in his flight from

Absalom, cursed and stoned by Shimei, he said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my son seeketh my life, how much more may this Benjamite do it; let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." Moses, who was naturally a man of hasty impetuous temperament, became renowned throughout the earth for meekness. We read, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of all the earth." This is said just after mention has been made of Aaron and Miriam having spoken against him, on account of his marriage with one who was not an Israelite. Moses seems to have shown his meekness by holding his peace. He said nothing. He allowed them to go on speaking against him*. God then took in hand his cause. He upheld his meek servant, and visited Miriam, who was probably the chief offender, with leprosy.

Meekness! there is not much of it! Men are always for standing up for their rights. They think it cowardly and mean-spirited to yield, which it is not. To a brave stout-hearted man it is a far greater struggle to be meek, than the reverse. Meekness is a very hard thing

* Numb. xii.

to acquire; it is a grace not easily made to grow in the garden of our soul; it wants a good deal of culture and cherishing. Yes, it is easy to resist evil, difficult to yield; it is easy to give blow for blow, one hard word for another, easy to return railing for railing; but it is not easy to sit down quietly under injurious treatment, and go on in the even tenour of our ways without feeling any disquiet. If you think of meekness as of a virtue any one may easily acquire, you make a great mistake; it is one of the last men gain. Meekness marks a Christian of some standing, it is a proof that a man has been sometime a scholar in the school of Christ. "And many," says a holy man, "think they possess this virtue who are wholly destitute of it. They are full of meekness so long as none offends them; but if unfortunately they are wounded ever so little, this pretended meekness vanishes, and gives place to anger and resentment." The Gospel differs in this respect from all the schemes of morals, able and clever as they were, of all the heathen philosophers of old, that it lays great stress upon, and attaches very great importance to the Passive Virtues,—virtues such as the one we are now considering, and that of humility, and patience, and resignation, and such like. No old philosopher ever spoke

of the blessedness of meekness. This was reserved for our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He gave us a higher and far more exalted code of morals; taught us how man could become most godlike. He was moreover Himself a perfect pattern of meekness. Isaiah had prophesied of Him, "He shall not cry, nor lift up; nor cause His voice to be heard in the street," and so it was—Meekness was conspicuous throughout His whole life in earth. He hardly ever replied to the calumnies heaped on Him. He went on uninterruptedly working His works of mercy. He patiently bore with the unbelief and dulness of comprehension of those about Him. He soothed the impetuosity of those of His disciples who wished Him to execute His wrath on the Samaritans who would not entertain Him. When in the garden of Gethsemane He might have summoned squadrons of angels to His defence, He allowed Himself to be made a prisoner. Before His judges He kept for the most part silence, whilst showers of accusations, wholly groundless, were poured forth against Him. Well might He say of Himself to those whom He desired to make disciples of, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Yes, if you would see this lovely grace of meekness in all its full

beauty and perfection, behold it in Jesus Christ. He was meek—He was ready to bear unmerited affronts—to endure uncomplainingly treatment of the most cruel kind imaginable. “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” He did good to the ungrateful. He replied with kindness to those who contradicted Him. O that men would study Christ more as their example! In Him we see what God would have us strive to be. We are to try to plant our feet in His footprints.

And now let us look at the promise annexed to this Beatitude. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”—inherit the earth. We expect mighty kings and conquerors to parcel out the earth! We do not look for this to fall to the lot of the meek! How are we to understand this? We find a like prediction in the 37th Psalm: “The meek-spirited shall possess the earth; and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace.” Now I believe it will not infrequently be found that even in the present existing state of things the meek do, as a rule, possess in the long run far more than the contentious and litigious. God’s blessing is seen to rest on them. They do not stand up for all their rights, but God is their Protector. He turns the hearts of men towards them, and

causes them to befriend them. The meek do in a certain sense enjoy the life that now is. They will be found even now, as contrasted with those who are not meek, to possess the earth. But the full promise of blessedness is in the future. It speaks, as some think, of a millennial period, and if not, at any rate of that earth in which St. Peter tells us shall dwell righteousness. There are to be a new heaven and a new earth. Whether or not it will be this earth of ours, after it has undergone a regeneration and purification by fire, Holy Scripture does not say. Some think that this earth, cleansed and remodelled, shall be the eternal dwelling-place of the saints. All we know for certain is, that there is to be an earth—either this present earth, greatly altered and transformed, or another.

This earth, then, whichever is meant, the meek shall inherit. It is theirs already in reversion. They must come into it. "The meek-spirited shall possess the earth." God's word is pledged for it. They may now be deprived of their rights. They may now be trodden down and trampled on—might often now rides down right; but their day is coming—a day in which there shall be restitution of all things—a day in which the saints shall possess the earth—a day in which the meek among men shall triumph.

Isaiah speaks of this coming hour when he says, "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." All things throughout the universe ultimately revert to God's people; for, as writes the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Meekness and possession are things which do not seem naturally to go together. Men would be apt to separate them. God unites them. He says, "Be meek, and you shall inherit. Resist not evil, and I will befriend you. Avenge not yourselves, and you will find I take your part. It is not human talent and ingenuity, but My blessing which makes a cause prosperous." As God fought Moses's battles, so He ever fights the battles of the meek. They may seem to themselves to be somewhat overlooked, but they are not. Their Redeemer is mighty, and He will plead their cause. O you who are apt to resist with the utmost acrimony and hastiness what you suppose to be any encroachment on your rights, study meekness—go to the school of Christ to learn how you may

make this grace of meekness grow. He who pronounced the blessing on it, will water it and cherish it, provided we ask Him. Pray then for this divine gift which makes us like to Jesus Christ. Say, "O Jesus, breathe into us of Thy meekness—cast down our high thoughts."

Carefully avoid also every sort of contest and dispute, and in order to this, defer readily to the opinions of others, and do not contradict them. Sacrifice your own tastes, inclinations and pleasures, rather than be obliged to contend with your neighbour. Try never to grow irritated by wrongs. It was a good rule of a saint of old, the observance of which may help us not a little in the acquirement of meekness, "Excuse not thyself under reproof."

Meekness! if it more prevailed, how far happier the world would be. Strife and contentions would in a great measure cease—love and harmony abound! In meekness there is also great rest, as said Jesus—"Learn of Me, for I am meek . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Humility.

"Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."*

A SAINT of old, St. Augustine, says, "if thou inquirest the way by which you may attain to Truth, and also what is the *first* and principal thing in the religion and discipline of Christ, I shall reply, it is *Humility*. If you ask what is the second, I shall answer, *Humility*. What is the third, *Humility*; and as often as thou puttest the question I shall still return the same answer, *Humility*." And was St. Augustine wrong in giving this high place and pre-eminence to *humility*? Does not Holy Scripture invest this grace with great dignity and importance? Does it not make its possession a necessary passport for our entrance into God's Kingdom, and declare that there can be no exaltation without previous self-abasement—that true and genuine conversion is humility: "Except ye be converted and become as little children," &c. Scrip-

* 1 Peter v. part of verse 5.

ture *never* represents humility as a sort of counsel of perfection, as a thing very good and very beautiful, and very excellent in its way, but which can be done *without*—as a mere redundant ornament of the Christian character—the mere frieze or cornice of the building which the architect may omit without endangering the stability of the building. It on the contrary speaks of it as a cloak which we are to *wrap all around us*, and which we are to hold together tightly with *a clasp*—for so the Greek word translated here “clothed” signifies. The word from which the verb is derived means a *servile cloak fastened with a clasp*—a cloak encompassing the whole person, not a mere adjunct of dress. The disciple of Christ is to PUT ON humility—to clasp it *firmly* to him. Now I fear it is a grace but little thought of, for it makes little or no show. It is not a grace which arrests attention, which calls the world’s notice to itself. It is a noiseless, silent, retired grace—a grace which superficial observers are apt to underrate and despise. They lack clear sight for the discerning of its exceeding loveliness.

Humility! this fair flower men hold cheap from not knowing its inestimable worth. It is the brightest jewel in the Christian’s crown—the richest of all the gems in his casket of graces.

Humility! it is a most rare virtue in any extent. We seldom have to exclaim, *What an humble man!* How much humility such a one has! We have perhaps only had to make the remark once or twice in our lives. We can hardly say the same of such remarks as, "He is very proud." "He is very conceited." "He thinks a great deal of himself." But when humility does *shine forth* in any one, we are all of us unconsciously drawn towards that person. It is a marvellous magnet. We feel at once that there is something solid and stable in that one's character—something which can be depended upon. If for instance we had had the misfortune to offend an humble man, we should not despair of winning back his friendship. If again an humble man took a wrong and perverted view of any truth or doctrine, we should always have a good hope of his coming to the light, and getting his crooked view put straight. With an humble man there seems every prospect, if pains are taken with him, of sin and error being got rid of. He is willing to be taught and guided—willing to hear what is to be said on *both* sides. The humble man does not hastily take up an opinion, and then refuse to hear any arguments on the other side. He does not arrogate all wisdom to himself,

and believe that wisdom will die with him! He ever gives others credit for their being as honest, sincere, and straightforward as himself! The humble man never vehemently and fiercely condemns others, fearing lest he may some day fall into the same condemnation. He is quick in discovering *the good points* in others' characters. He is blind to their failings, unless *duty* requires him, as it sometimes does, to search them out. We sometimes find men who are liberal in almsgiving, and who are very energetic in doing good, who are earnestly devoted to the healing the bodies and souls of men, singularly devoid of this chief grace, Humility. Humility is a plant they have not cultivated, and it will not grow without cultivation. And yet without some degree of Humility, all other graces count for nothing. They are worth nothing. Humility is the basis, the foundation on which all sound, healthy Christian graces must be built up. It has been called, "The vessel which contains all other graces." A *proud Christian* is a contradiction in terms, it is what cannot exist. A proud Christian can only mean, if it means any thing at all, a poor, feeble, unhealthy Christian, one who knows of Christianity little save the name. As pride is the beginning of all kinds of sin, so is humility the *source* of virtues—this is that

which nourishes, protects, and supports them. The man who without it (says a saint of old) seeks to acquire virtues, does no more than throw dust to the wind. If this grace of humility totters, all the rest will, before long, come to ruin. With humility we become like the angels, whereas pride has changed angels into devils.

Humility! it is not a virtue we can put off and on as we feel inclined. It is one *hard* to acquire, and one which is hard to keep. Let a man once think himself humble, and he in a degree ceases to be humble. The thoroughly humble man has no opinion of himself. Real humility can only arise out of a deep feeling of our OWN DEMERIT. Any thing short of this is but a faulty, defective foundation for it. Humility built up upon any thing save and except a sense of sin, cannot last. It is the man conscious of his many sins and miserable shortcomings who is humble. It is the feeling that we are nothing, and that we have nothing, which makes a man humble. It is the realizing in some infinitesimal degree the distance between God and us, between His greatness and our littleness, His holiness and our unholiness, His beauty and our utter deformity, that makes a man empty himself of his self-conceit, and loathe himself.

The publican in the parable was humble, because he saw no good in himself! Self-acquaintance, self-knowledge, is then the best encourager and promoter of humility. Open a man's eyes to his state before God, and humility is born in him. Job, when he exclaimed, Behold, I am vile, was (who can doubt it) humble. Angels, high and exalted, and perfect as they are, are humble; for they are aware of the distance between the Finite and infinite—the vast immeasurable abyss existing between the most exalted of created beings and the great Creator. They know their own nothingness. *Nearness to the Eternal makes them humble.* It was like Peter when Christ was in his boat, his own sinfulness and vileness oppressed and overwhelmed him. It was more than he could bear. He begged Christ to go. "Depart from me," he cried, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The angel then, whoever he may be, Michael or Gabriel, or some other not yet revealed to man, who stands nearest to God's throne, who has the closest access to the Eternal, is, I think we may conclude, the most humble being in all creation. He can tell best the unapproachable distance between God and the highest and purest of creation.

Angels *humble!* Oh, why then are *earth and*

ashes proud? O what has *man* to boast of his corruption, his *hourly* sins? What ought to be the cure of man's Pride, and teach him once and for all, Humility, is the great fact of the *Incar-nation*. Behold the only begotten Son of the Almighty God, very God with His Father, becomes an Infant, and lies in a manger! O how true is the saying, "He made Himself of no reputation!" He could descend no lower. Canst thou then be *proud*, when *thy God is humble*? Carest thou to be exalted, when *thy God is abased*? If the Incarnation teaches us not Humility, whither shall we go and learn it? Our case is then well-nigh hopeless.

And now let us consider some things which a truly humble man will *not* do.

He will not sound his own praises, no not in the very slightest degree. According to that which is said in the Book of the Proverbs, "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." The humble man will make no display of his alms, his fasts, or prayers. He courts and loves secrecy in such matters. The one only witness he cares to have is his Father in heaven. The humble man does not use many humble *words*, but aims rather to *conceal* his humility. We may be perfectly sure, that the man who *speaks* of his *humility*, who says he is humble, *is not so*.

He who prides himself on his humility, is *not* humble.

The man, moreover, who longs to be known by the world, and noticed, is *not* humble. He who is greedy of praise and commendation is not humble. The man who wishes high place and authority over others is not humble. You are then inclined to ask, *who* then is humble? But *few*.

Then there are many spurious kinds of humility. Some, for instance, will not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood *often*, because they do not consider themselves good enough. Such would cover their own half-heartedness and worldliness under a pretext of humility. For "*they are not worthy*," read "*they do not feel disposed*." "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above," said the prophet Isaiah to unhappy Ahaz; but he answered, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." Oh, unrighteous man! He would seem to feel great reverence for God, and excuses himself under the colour of *humility* from aspiring to that grace which the divine goodness offers him; but sees he not that when God desires to give us His graces, it is pride to refuse them? that the gifts of God oblige us to receive them, and

that it is *humility* to obey and to comply, as near as we can, with His desires?

Yes; some, from false humility, keep themselves back in the spiritual life. Oh, take heed, beware of spurious humility. It can NEVER be humility to count ourselves unworthy of spiritual gifts. For ever banish that mistake. Satan has turned this false humility to good account. "I am not fit for Confirmation. The Lord's Supper is not for such as I am." Turn a deaf ear henceforth to such evil suggestions of the Tempter. How he must exult in the thought of winning souls under the excuse of *humility*. Shun false humility, labour to attain the *true*; one ounce of humility is worth ten thousand pounds of honours. He that may have choice pearls, why should he care for worthless shells? The way to become humble is to ask God for humility, to beg of Him to increase our self-knowledge, and then gladly to walk in the way of humiliation. "Without humiliations," says a saint of old, "we cannot arrive at humility." St. Bernard says, "Humiliation is the road to humility." Consequently, if thou desirest to be humble, enter into the path of humiliation; for if thou wilt not be humbled, thou wilt never have humility. Accept then with resignation, if not with joy, all the humiliations which are to be met with in

the intercourse of life, and turn them to thy profit.

Entertain a low opinion of thyself,—of thy talents and goodness,—esteem thyself the least of all. Do all thy actions every day with the intention of obtaining humility. Pray for those who have humbled thee; complain not of them, for if thou dost, thou wilt lose the fruit of thy humiliations. *Suffer, forgive, and forget.* Let thy humility be sincere; a *feigned* humility is from the devil. Be humble, *not* to appease or to win the esteem of men, but because thou knowest humility is pleasing to God. And shouldest thou by God's grace attain this blessed and beautiful grace of humility, exult *not* in the thought that thou art humble, for self-love glides in every where, and would rob us even of our humility. He who would preserve in his soul the precious treasure of humility must hide it carefully from the eyes of others, and from himself.

Oh, brethren beloved, put ye on humility, gird on this beautiful garment, clasp it tightly to you; so shall your God ADD to the grace He has already imparted to you; for “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” Be humble, and Christ's merits shall one day place you high up. He, our dear Saviour, set us the

brightest example of humility. Behold Him among His assembled disciples, *not* waited upon, but Himself girded with a towel, acting the part of a servant *washing their feet*. Truly the robe of humility He wore was white and unsullied. Pray then each morning that you may put on the *garment of humility*. Dressed in that dress you may, for Christ's sake, indulge some hope of Heaven.

The Love of Enemies.

*"Love your enemies *."*

"A HARD saying ; who can hear it?" I seem to hear you say, as did the disciples upon another occasion. "We can love our friends, we can love those bound to us by the blessed ties of relationship, those of our own flesh and blood, our kith and kin ; we can love those who are kind to us, who bear with our infirmities, and failings, and inconsistencies ; we can love those who make sacrifices for us and go out of their way to do us good. This is easy, natural, a thing not only which can be done, but which we find pleasure in doing. The love of relations and friends is a thing we can understand and go with ; but as to loving our enemies, it is quite beyond our power, a law of perfection which we cannot attain unto. We can restrain ourselves from doing them any ill turn for their evil deeds. We can refrain from the retaliation of injuries, we can forgive them the wrongs

* Matt. v. part of verse 44.

they do ; but to go farther than this we find impossible. How is it possible to cherish feelings of *love* towards them ? It is a height of goodness to which we will at once state we cannot aspire." Stay a moment ; " Love your enemies," are they not Christ's words, spoken unto His Church unto the end of time ? Did not Christ know human nature *thoroughly* ? Does not Holy Scripture state that He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man ? Did He not know what man was capable of, and of what he was incapable ; what man could do, and what man could not do ? Was He not intimately acquainted with all the workings of man's spirit ? Did he not know to what man could school and discipline himself ? Would He, think you, have issued any command which He knew could not by any possibility be obeyed ? Would it not have been *mocking* us ? Oh ! far be such a thought from us of *Jesus Christ*, Who is all tenderness, and gentleness, and love ! He knew what it was possible for man by God's grace to accomplish, and what it was hopeless for him to attempt.

" Love your enemies." The usual ordinary word for " love " is used here in the Greek. It is the same sort and kind of love we are to entertain towards our enemies that we feel to-

wards our friends. I am not saying it can be the same in degree and intensity, but it is to be love of the same description: not mere kindly feeling, but "love."—"Love your enemies." Now that there is very little of this love for our enemies, you will at once all freely own; this only shows how little there is amongst us of Christ's religion—of the religion of the Gospel. Men talk *glibly* enough of what is the Gospel, and what is not; but they have really very poor ideas of that Gospel Christ preached. "Love your enemies" was a component and an integral part of it. No member of Christ can divest himself of it, and say, "With that part of the Gospel teaching I have nothing to do." The love of enemies goes to make up the Christian character. He who has it *not*, lacks one of the main badges of the Christian man. He wants that temper and spirit Christ meant His followers to possess.

"Love your enemies." Enemies; it is a hard, grating-sounding word! Some who are young are not conscious of having any enemies; but there are probably few, if any, who have reached middle life, who have been thrown about much in the world, and who have been placed, as is the case with most, in a variety of circumstances, and seen and known their fellow-men

under various aspects, but have some enemies. The degree in which men may be our enemies greatly varies; some may have merely applied to us hard names, disparaging epithets, and have been merely tongue-enemies; some may have gone beyond this, and have tried to thwart us in little things, to cause us annoyance in petty ways; others may have inflicted on us grievous wrongs; some may merely have spoken against us, others may have acted against us; some may have done both these. Some may have stood in the way of our advancement, by lessening our reputation; some may have secretly stated false things to our disadvantage. There are open enemies, and secret enemies. Now it is natural to us to harbour the remembrance of wrongs done us, to cherish the recollection of a bitter, scornful, contemptuous, cutting word, of an angry or disdainful look, of an injurious act. It is natural to us to let our mind brood over such wrongs, and to dislike, if not to hate, more and more those thus opposed to us. If we are Christians in temper, we learn to endure such wrongs patiently; but there we stop, alas! too often: we do not go on to love these assailers of our peace. Our Master, nevertheless, lays down as our plain and bounden duty the love of these our foes; saying, without annexing any condition or

exception, "Love your enemies." We can only say, how very unlike Christ's teaching is to what we ourselves are, and to what we see for the most part around us! Yes; when we open our eyes, and look straight at any Gospel precept, I must own the effect is very startling. We ask, "Have not men *drifted away* from the Christianity our Saviour preached? Whence this new and *lower-toned* religion of this nineteenth century? is it from heaven or of men? Men are content to live and to die, *not loving their enemies*. Can this be right? can it be safe? When such land on the eternal shore, will they have a welcome from Christ?" But you say, "Many of the precepts of the Gospel are possible; but this one of which you speak is *not*." I would then boldly assert, *it is* possible. Men can learn to love their enemies. It is one of those things which, impossible to nature, is possible to grace. It is one of those things which can only be breathed into us by the Holy Spirit—one of those things which can only be taught us of God. "Love your enemies;" the flesh rebels at the thought. The spirit of self-love rises up strong within us; but the Spirit of Christ calms and soothes us, and shows us the blessedness of it. It needs God's grace, not only to *make* us love our enemies, but to make us *wish* to love them.

There are some commands of Christ men wish and desire to obey, although they go on breaking them; but this, "love your enemies," is one which we have *first* to acquire the *wish* to carry out. A proof surely how greatly our Father's image on our souls has been defaced,—what a ruin and wreck man is! Yes; it proves our lost state, not even to have the wish to keep one of God's commandments; and I firmly believe it is a truth that very many who pass for good Christians neither wish nor try to love their enemies. Have *you* strongly wished it? Be honest with yourself. Have you laboured to love your enemies? Gone at it heartily? Remember it is more than is required of you than *not* returning evil for evil—reviling for reviling; it is the entertaining *love* for those who hate you.

Oh how great is the majesty! how high and dignified the code of morals of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! How far exalted above all the teaching that the world had ever heard before. How clearly is it seen to be not earth-born, but of heavenly descent! Did Seneca, did Plato, say, "Love your enemies?" It would have seemed to them a thing beyond the range of human possibility. Christ speaks of it as a thing which is *a matter of course*. He does

not introduce it with a flourish of trumpets, as something to be expected only of certain initiated ones, of very advanced disciples, but as a plain duty, binding on every member of the Church of Christ as much as the injunction, "*Swear not at all.*" If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you cannot escape from this command. It is one you must obey, or disobey at your soul's peril. We cannot make a selection from Christ's laws, take just those which happen to suit us, turning a deaf ear to His other words. The true and loyal servant has the same regard for all his master's instructions. He tries to carry out the hardest and most unexpected of them. "Love your enemies." Christ loved His. To use the words of another,—when, on the cross, He could in one moment have brushed away His merciless tormentors, forth went the prayer of love, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Remember, Christ had our feelings. As man—as man in the perfection of man's nature, He felt keenly indignity, and shame, and pain. He was not impassible. The iron entered into His soul. Christ pitied these poor souls, who through ignorance or sin gave into death's hands their most loving friend. Our enemies are of two classes, either those of

our own making, or those who have become such through no fault of ours. All we should take the utmost pains to win back ; the former, we shall find it less hard to love ; the difficulty is with the latter—those who hate us, and we know not why. Let us hope and believe that there are in the case of all these, *misunderstandings* which might be cleared away—that such think that they have *well-grounded* cause for their dislike of us, and that we may appear to them in some sort wrong-doers. Make every allowance you possibly can for your enemies' behaviour towards you, and *that* will greatly help to clear your path for loving them. Men are often not so bad as they appear. We are apt to look at wrongs done us through a magnifying glass. Small wrongs done to ourselves are apt to appear very great ones. What most men have to strive against is the idea of their self-importance. And now, how is this love of our enemies, which is not natural to us, to be gained ? First and foremost, by prayer ; often asking of Christ this love, Who, when hanging on the cross, remembered first the good of His enemies, then of His mother, and last of Himself. Our enemies should find a place in our daily prayers. It was said once of a very holy man, that it was worth while to

offend him, to gain his prayers. Another great help is often to remind ourselves, it is the Lord's command, and therefore we must needs do it.

A third help is, that beholding in your enemies the image of God, although impaired, which He gave them in creation, thou mayest awaken thyself to reverence and love it. Who can do otherwise than love God's workmanship?

A fourth help, that further beholding in them the unspeakable ransom wherewith Christ hath ransomed them, not silver and gold, but His own blood, thou mayest labour that it be not spent in vain, wasted and trampled on.

And this love, our Saviour goes on to show, manifests itself in words of kindness, blessing, in acts of good, and prayers.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, *bless* them that curse you, *do good* to them that hate you, and *pray* for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Blessing, doing good, and praying, prove the reality and sincerity of the love. Loving our enemies binds us closer unto God, makes us more thoroughly His children. The evil and the good share by His decree alike in the glorious sunshine. The lands of the just and of the unjust are equally refreshed by His showers of rain. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,

for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." To use the words of another. "The more we lift ourselves above the world's view of the duty and expediency of revenge and exclusive dealing, into the mind with which the righteous Judge, strong and patient, who is provoked every day, yet does good to the unthankful and evil, the more firmly shall we assure, and the more nobly illustrate, our place as sons in God's family."

And see we not here a reason for loving our enemies, that they are our *benefactors*, in affording us the opportunity of growing in resemblance to our Heavenly Father? "Do not hate (says St. Chrysostom) him who injures thee; for he thus confers a benefit on thee, and places thee in the road to honour."

These are deep-seated reasons why there should be strict obedience to each of Christ's commands. He our loving Saviour knows what is for our good—how we must live and act to grow in likeness to our God. To be like God is heaven.

But, may be, you say within your heart, "All this is very well; were it any one else, I could forgive him, but my enemy is a wretch who deserves not my friendship." Suffer me

to ask thee, Dost thou deserve the friendship of Jesus Christ, after the many sins thou hast committed? Learn to forgive a slight offence, that God may forgive thy great ones. "Am I then obliged to love one who loves me not, but who persecutes me?" Yes, you are obliged. "I forgive him, but I have a retentive memory; I shall never *forget* what he has done to me." That is to say, thou art willing that God should never forget thy sins; for He will deal with thee as thou dealest with thy fellow-creatures. "I forgive him, but I will not see him." Thou wilt not see thy enemy, thou turnest away thine eyes when thou meetest him. Wilt thou dare afterwards to pray to the Lord to cast upon thee a look of mercy? "I wish him no ill." That is not enough. Thou must wish him well—love him as thyself—be grieved if any one grieves him—prevent its being so if thou hast the power.

Oh, tear resolutely from thy heart the least bitterness against thy neighbour, and pray for those who may be to thee a cause of trouble—forgive them, after the example of Jesus Christ, and make excuses for them. If thou always forgivest, thou mayest then say to God with confidence, and without dread of refusal, "Father, forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive

them that trespass against me." In future put into your prayers any who are your enemies. "Love your enemies," and you will soon enter into a fuller and deeper understanding of the love of God.

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